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QUESTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL PERSONS SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT

Letter dated 17 June 1992 from the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-eighth session

1. It is indeed regrettable that despite our numerous protests concerning the circulation of illegal letters emanating from the illegal regime in the occupied part of Cyprus, the Permanent Representative of Turkey has once again effected the circulation of document E/CN.4/1992/78.

2. The illegal document contained in E/CN.4/1992/78 is full of falsehood, distortions and inaccuracies. The Turkish side resorted once again to its well-known tactic of diverting attention in an attempt to absolve the Turkish Government from its responsibilities clearly laid down by international law and human rights instruments with regard to the tragic problem of the missing persons in Cyprus. Such diversionary tactics employed by the Government of Turkey, exemplify once more its long-standing unwillingness to cooperate and assist sincerely the efforts to solve a humanitarian problem created as a result of her invasion of the Republic of Cyprus in 1974.

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3. It is not my intention to reply to each and every allegation and distortion contained in the said document. Attempting such an exercise would require using skills and tactics of the type which are alien and contrary to the discourse and the practice pursued in international forums entrusted with the responsibility of promoting solutions to humanitarian problems. It would, indeed, be tragic, if we allowed a humanitarian problem affecting thousands of Cypriot families to be treated and discussed at the level of propaganda.

4. Moreover, it would be an insult to the feelings of the families of approximately 1,600 Greek Cypriots, including women and children, who disappeared during and after the 1974 invasion of the Republic of Cyprus by Turkey, who day by day for the last 18 years have been living the agony and uncertainty of not knowing whether their loved ones are alive or dead. It is worth recalling that many of their disappeared relatives were arrested by the Turkish army during the hostilities. Others were illegally arrested by the invading forces at their homes, well after the end of hostilities. According to eyewitness testimonies and other documentary evidence, most of those arrested by the Turkish army were subsequently seen alive in prisoners of war camps, both in mainland Turkey, and in the occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus. These are the facts.

5. In a desperate attempt to dispute these facts, Turkey and her instruments in the occupied part of Cyprus, resort to newspaper articles and to other opinions expressed in books and films, about the missing persons in Cyprus, or deliberately distort statements supposedly made by representatives of international humanitarian organizations, and refer to reports of a very dubious nature and origin. These tactics, clearly reflect the negative attituded adopted by the Turkish side towards all the efforts made to find a solution to a real humanitarian problem.

6. Moreover, it is apparent that this approach cannot in any way be considered helpful towards the effort pursued since 1984 by the Committee on Missing Pesons in Cyprus, to find a solution to the tragic problem of the missing persons in Cyprus, nor does it contribute positively to the creation of the necessary conditions for achieving the desired progress in the Committee's work.

7. The Government of Cyprus takes this opportunity to appeal, once more, to all concerned to assist actively the efforts to find a speedy solution to this tragic humanitarian problem, in accordance with the principles and standards envisaged by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and human rights conventions.

8. Media reports and other opinions expressed about the fate of the missing Greek Cypriots cannot mitigate the responsibility of the Turkish Government to account for the fate of the Greek Cypriot missing persons. What is needed and expected from the Government of Turkey, is to come forward with the information and evidence in its possession, on the basis of which the fate of the missing persons is to be determined.

9. The Government of Turkey should restore and respect the right of the families of the missing persons to be informed of the fate of their relatives and show the necessary cooperation and goodwill to this end. The recent findings of the European Commission of Human Rights on the issue of the Greek Cypriot missing persons, made public on 2 April 1992, "that the Greek Cypriots who are still missing were unlawfully deprived of their liberty, in Turkish custody in 1974, noting that Turkey has failed to account for the fate of these persons" leave Turkey with no choice but to comply with the internationally accepted principles and contribute towards finding a solution to this tragic humanitarian problem.

10. I should be grateful if this letter were circulated as a document of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 10.

(Signed): George Zodiates
Chargé d'affaires a.i.